

Children's Services Improvement Plan

Section D

An overview of the key themes of the improvement plan

9.1 Background

9.1.1 The Children and Young People's Plan 2009-2014(CYPP) sets out a vision for all the children of Leeds to be happy, healthy, safe, successful and free from the effects of poverty. The CYPP sets out two important cross cutting priorities, very relevant to the context that Leeds is now in given more recent inspection findings, which are:

- improving safeguarding
- enabling integrated working

9.1.2 Additionally, the CYPP set out 8 further short term priorities and 10 longer term ambitions. All of the short term priorities are relevant to the themes in the Improvement Plan and many of the targets feature in the Improvement Notice. The short term priorities are:

- Improving outcomes for looked after children
- Improving attendance and reducing persistent absence from school
- Improving early learning and primary outcomes in deprived areas
- Providing places to do and things to do
- Raising the proportion of young people in education or work
- Reducing child poverty
- Reducing teenage conception
- Reducing the need for children and young people to be in care

9.2 Structure of the Improvement Plan

9.2.1 However, it is clear that we need to increase the pace of improvement in a number of areas in Leeds and this Improvement Plan will provide a focus for that increased pace and impact. The Improvement Plan is organised around five themes, in order to provide comprehensive and coherent coverage of the issues. The themes are:

- Effective leadership and governance of integrated children's services in Leeds
- Excellent safeguarding standards and practice
- Improve outcomes for looked after children
- All young people participating fully, socially and economically
- A highly skilled, well motivated, motivated and continually developing workforce

9.2.2 The detail of what will be done, by, when and who, how, and how we will measure success is all laid out in section E of the Improvement Plan – a detailed implementation plan across all the themes. However, these can also be summarised as:

- Effective leadership and governance of integrated children's services in Leeds

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- Implement new Leadership and Governance arrangements for Children's Services, including developing an accountability framework for the delivery of outcomes for children and young people at a local level
 - Create a new Children's Trust Board with appropriate governance arrangements at both citywide and local level
 - Review the Children and Young People's Plan
 - Establish robust commissioning arrangements
 - Develop a strong performance management culture and framework, and develop robust quality assurance systems
 - Consider requirements for budget realignment to support delivery of children's services priorities
- Excellent safeguarding standards and practice
 - Establishment of high quality operational procedures with strict compliance, good record keeping and clear risk assessed decision making backed up by excellent quality assurance processes
 - Revise the operation of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board to ensure it is able to carry out all its functions effectively
 - Improve Early Intervention and prevention by: good information sharing, adherence to clear thresholds, use of CAF and effective interagency working
 - Improve outcomes for looked after children
 - Improve placements for looked after children
 - Reduce the number in care and time spent in care
 - Ensure effective planning for children and young people in care and leaving care
 - All young people participating fully, socially and economically
 - Implement an action plan to reduce the numbers of NEET (including the number of not knowns)
 - Improve attainment with particular focus on under achieving groups and settings (Eg. LAC relevant BME pupils, SEN and Free School Meals, National Challenge)
 - Improve school attendance with a particular focus on secondary and persistent absentees
 - Reduce the numbers of young people involved in burglary and reduce the high number of young people in the youth justice system who receive a custodial sentence
 - A highly skilled, well motivated, motivated and continually developing workforce
 - Produce workforce development plan for an integrated C&YP workforce to include recruitment, retention, training, skills development and provide improved clarity of roles and responsibilities
 - Ensure staff are enabled to carry out their responsibilities efficiently by provision of effective IT systems and adequate support

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- Ensure C&YP Social Care staff have appropriate and manageable workloads, and are kept under regular supervision

9.2.3 The Annual Review of the CYPP 09-14 will take place during March/April, set within the context of the revised children's trust arrangements. This Annual Review will take account of the Improvement Plan.

9.3 How we will know when we've got there

9.3.1 We want to secure excellent services for children and young people in Leeds by 2014. This will mean no areas for priority action being found in our next unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment, and improved annual performance ratings to "adequate" in 2010 and "performing well" in 2011.

9.3.2 During the lifetime of the Improvement Notice we will embed revised Children's Trust arrangements city-wide and at local level. This will include effective Children's Trust and Local Safeguarding Children Boards, with the appropriate level of representation across all partners, and the necessary supporting and consultative groups, with robust linkages between the different elements, in order to drive our improvement through the Children and Young People's Plan. Our leadership arrangements will be redefined to better manage and support effective integrated frontline services.

9.3.3 Through internal self- evaluation and external scrutiny we have increased our self-awareness and understanding of risk .We will build on this approach in a more systematic way, embedding it into our routine performance management. Delivery of services for children and young people will be backed by integrated support functions including commissioning and performance management to achieve greater coherence across the whole system and enable robust prioritisation and alignment of resources to priority improvement areas and sustaining good quality services. Our longer term approach to financial planning will ensure that budget allocations are kept under review and aligned to the delivery of our plans and priorities. Any such planning will need to take place in the context of the national funding picture and the impact of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review.

9.3.4 Strengthening the leadership and challenge role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board will help us to ensure that practice in Leeds is robust and agencies are working together effectively to safeguard vulnerable children and young people. An Integrated Safeguarding Unit will help to deliver a robust child protection system in which children, young people and families are properly engaged. Promotion of safeguarding, learning the lessons from Serious Case Reviews and delivering comprehensive training are all important elements that will be secured to improve our safeguarding arrangements.

9.3.5 We recognise that we cannot secure the improvements we need for our children and young people without a skilled, motivated and well supported

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workforce that continues to develop, and this will be reflected in our Integrated Workforce Strategy.

- 9.3.6 It is of critical importance that frontline staff have appropriate case loads and are well supported, trained and supervised. Staff will be deployed into multi-disciplinary and multi-agency teams as best fits the needs of the children, young people, families and communities we are here to assist. To achieve this we will require strong leadership and a clear agreed vision for the delivery of integrated children's services in Leeds.
- 9.3.7 Clear thresholds for intervention have been developed and will be fully understood and utilised by staff across all agencies. Integrated front-line services targeting support for children and families with additional and multiple additional needs will deliver timely responses to problems using appropriate care pathways. As the whole system is strengthened to respond more effectively to meet families' needs, we expect to see a reduction in the numbers of children and young people becoming looked after.
- 9.3.8 Whilst outcomes for our looked after children are improving, they lag behind those for their peers and this is unacceptable. We will continue to narrow that gap through better assessment, planning and co-ordinated individualised support for looked after children and young people and their carers. We will make sure that we are listening to what looked after children and young people are telling us about their experiences and use this to evaluate and improve our provision. A better range of local placements will not only improve choice and stability for children and young people, but will also have an impact on one of our major budget pressures, thus freeing resources for other priority areas of activity.
- 9.3.9 We want to see a greater proportion of our young people engaging fully in their community, thriving socially and economically. This means that we will focus our collective efforts more keenly on those groups of children and young people who are particularly vulnerable to under achievement. The gap between them and their peers must reduce progressively. We will tackle disengagement through our approach to Raising the Participation Age : ensuring we have the right range of opportunities for learning and training that will excite and motivate our young people, and providing them with good quality advice and support to access them. Our systems for information, advice and guidance will be strengthened to track young people more effectively and ensure that they stay within a supportive network that will help them to succeed. Partnership activity including a "Think Family" approach and integrated offender management will be used to reduce burglary and re-offending.
- 9.3.10 Leadership across all levels of our children's trust partnership in Leeds needs to be active, visible and effective in sustaining high quality responses to improve outcomes for our children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable. As our Improvement Plan develops we expect it to provide further

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evidence of strong partnership activity to deliver on our priorities, and increased satisfaction of both service users and staff.